

too, of the whole Renaissance with its aping of the Classics. There are poets who can write vitally of, and in the style of, their own age; there remain others for whom it is equally essential to escape from it. Generations of critics have lost their heads and tempers squabbling which is right. Surely both. Surely it is understandable that a poet may wish to break away to some magic islet of his own, where he can feel himself monarch of all he surveys, because he shares it only with the dead. For they do not cramp our style as the living can. We can learn from them without fearing to become too imitatively like them; and the older the dead, the easier they are to elbow aside when we turn to write ourselves, as if their ghosts wore thinner and more shadowy with the years. Distance can lend enchantment also to the voice.

At all events it is on borrowed plumes that Beddoes soars his highest, and when masquerading as a Jacobean that he seems most himself. No one since Dryden has so recaptured the splendour of blank verse as a medium for dialogue, freeing it from that marmoreal stiffness which Milton imposed. For it is, indeed, almost as if the author of *Paradise Lost* had turned the verse of *Hamlet* into stone; to be carved and built by him and others after him into shapes of monumental nobility, but never again to seem like living flesh and blood, as once in

Elizabethan hands.
Milton's 'organ-voice' has no *vox humana*;
and musical
as a Wordsworth or a Tennyson may be,
Shakespeare's
Cleopatra speaks what has since become a
dead language.

Beddoes alone seems to me to have re-
discovered die
old secrets of varied stress and fingering, of
feminine
ending and resolved foot, in all their
elasticity. His lines
run rippling like wind along the corn: his
Muse moves
with die grace of his Valeria: